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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000944

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION, MARCH 16: IRAQ; FRENCH  
OPPOSITION TO WAR; ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS

REF: KUWAIT 00900

1. Summary: Kuwaiti commentators lash out at France as the embodiment of opposition to war against Saddam's regime. The Arab League delegation to the US, and possibly to Baghdad, is derided as a "tour group." In an op/ed entitled "A Leader is Needed at the White House," one commentator remarks baldly: "President Bush can regain (his) leadership by giving the order to start the war."

Strong criticism of US policy remains, however, with Secretary Rumsfeld being branded as a "criminal" for

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"providing Saddam with WMD during Iraq's war against Iran." Another writer states, "the demonstrations around the world may not prevent the US from starting the war, but America has lost many of its supporters because of the way it treats other nations."

The radical Islamist "Salafist" group in Kuwait defends its opposition to what they term a "new Crusade" in Iraq (reftel) as "no different from the official Kuwaiti position." End Summary.

2. News Stories: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Shaikh Sabah Al-Ahmad stated ruled out any possibility for a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis, and said that Kuwait's participation in the reconstruction of Iraq would be discussed later.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Security Services and State Security Major General Abdullah Al-Faris denied that the Ministry tortures those who object to the American presence in Kuwait as reported in the Arab Committee for Human Rights report.

Public prosecution has ordered the detention of five men accused of plotting sabotage extended for 21 more days.

Assistant Secretary General for Media Affairs of the Scientific Salafi Movement, Dr. Sajed Al-Abdali defended their strongly worded position statement of last week (reftel) against US military action by saying that it is no different from the official Kuwaiti position.

Al-Seyassah reports that Kuwaitis have opened accounts in the Iraqi currency in Jordanian banks.

Al-Watan reports that four GCC soldiers in Kuwait as part of the common defense "Peninsula Shield" forces have resigned in accordance with a fatwa forbidding support for an American-led war on Iraq.

Editorials:

3. "French Justifications"  
MP Ahmad Al-Rubei wrote in independent Al-Qabas (3/15): "It is very obvious that the French position is the main reason for Iraq's stubbornness for not complying with the international community demand to eliminate WMD. If France is against the war, then why does not it use its good relations with Saddam to tell him that he is the core of the problem?"

4. "Great France and the Late Adulthood"  
Adel Al-Khudari wrote in independent Al-Watan (3/16): "I believe that the reason behind France's threat to use the veto is because France may not get the lion's share of the contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq. France's attempt to defend the most worthless dictator on earth would damage its reputation because by doing so, it ignores the Iraqi opposition and human rights."

5. "Who Dares to Say?"  
Former MP Ahmad Al-Baghli wrote in independent Al-Qabas

(3/13): "The Arab League delegation formed after the Sharm El-Shaikh Arab Summit is no more than a tour group. The only American official who met with them was Secretary of State Powell. [and] they met with him so they can say that they have done something. The same delegation stated that they would also visit Iraq to meet with Saddam to convince him to step down from power. [but] would any member of this delegation, namely [Arab League Secretary General] Amr Moussa, dare to tell Saddam to step down.?"

16. "Saddam's Initiative for Bush to Step Down"  
Abdelrahman Al-Ajmi wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (3/13): "Should Bush respond to Saddam Hussein's proposal and submit his resignation, this will not be met with satisfaction by the American electorate, because it is the people who elect their president. But, if Saddam relinquishes power, the Iraqis will be overjoyed."

17. "A Leader is Required at the White House"  
Abdelameer Al-Turkei wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (3/16): "We are not advising President Bush to be a leader, but rather want to remind him of John Kennedy, who was able to eliminate the dangers of Soviet missiles in Cuba. President Bush can regain this leadership by giving the order to start the war. The moment he does that, all who object to his policies will retreat."

18. "Protests Will Not Stop the War"  
Ahmad Al-Jarallah wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (3/16): "Focusing on these [anti-war] protests results in obstructing the views of people who support a war against Iraq, and who constitute a majority among Arab decision-makers and Westerners. The US has pledged to establish a new democratic regime in Iraq by giving Iraqis the freedom to elect their regime and to take control over their country's resources. Some parts of the Arab world are arranging such protests on the presumption that Saddam Hussein will defeat the US."

19. "Even You, Annan"  
Salah Al-Fadhli wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (3/16): "Even Kofi Annan, who is America's man at the United Nations, stated that any military action without UN approval would be considered a violation of the UN convention. America has crossed all the red lines, and has no consideration for anybody. The demonstrations around the world may not prevent the US from starting the war, but America has lost many of its supporters because of the way it treats other nations."

10. "Halabja and Rumsfeld"  
Ahamd Al-Daieen wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (3/16): "Fifteen years after the massacre at Halabja in Iraq in which Saddam used WMD against his own people, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld is leading an unprecedented military campaign to topple Saddam and to disarm Iraq. Ironically, Rumsfeld's name is associated with the Halabja massacre. He was involved in providing Saddam with WMD during Iraq's war against Iran during the Regan Administration. Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan Majeed [the Iraqi military governor of Kuwait during the 1990-91 occupation]. are not the only criminals."

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